

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7251

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 8024

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, KS, KN

SUBJECT: NORTH KOREAN PROPOSES POSTPONEMENT OF SNCC MEETING

REF: SEOUL 7586

SUMMARY: NORTH KOREA HAS PROPOSED POSTPONEMENT OF SNCC DEPUTY CO:CHAIRMEN'S MEETING SCHEDULED FOR DEC. 4. ROK IS SEEKING TO GAIN PROPAGANDA ADVANTAGE FROM NORTH'S ACTION BY EXPRESSING OWN WILLINGNESS TO HOLD MEETING ON SCHEDULE. END SUMMARY.

1. NORTH KOREA NOV 30 PROPOSED THAT NINTH MEETING OF DEPUTY CO-CHAIRMEN OF SOUTH-NORTH COORDINATING COMMITTEE (SNCC) BE POSTPONED. PROPOSAL WAS MADE AT MEETING BETWEEN SPOKESMEN OF TWO SIDES CALLED FOR BY NORTH VIA HOT LINE ON NOVEMBER 28. ROK PRESS AYS PROPOSAL WAS FOR INDEFINITE POSTPONEMENT. HOWEVER, PYONGYANG RADIO HAS REPORTED ITS PROPOSAL CALLED FOR RESUMPTION OF MEETINGS EARLY JANUARY 1975

2. IN STATEMENT TO PRESS FOLLOWING MEETING, SOUTH SIDE SPOKESMAN LEE TONG BOK GAVE NO REASON FOR NORTH'S ACTION BUT SAID THAT IT SHOW'S PYONGYANG'S INSINCERE ATTITUDE TOWARD
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THE DIALOGUE. " IN VIEW OF AUGUST 15 INCIDENT AND

CONSTRUCTION OF THE INFILTRATION TUNNEL IN THE SOUTHERN SECTOR OF THE DMZ, " LEE SAID, " IT IS CERTAIN THAT THE NORTH KOREAN COMMUNISTS HAVE NO INTENTION TO AITHFULLY CONTINUE THE TALKS."

3. LEE TOLD EMBOFF PRIVATELY DECEMBER 2 THAT NORTH SIDE SPOKESMAN CHUN KUM CHOL HAD OPENED THEIR DISCUSSION AT PANMUNJOM BY OBSERVING THAT DEPUTY CO-CHAIRMEN WERE "TOO IMPORTANT" TO BE BOTHERED BY NECESSITY OF HOLDING PERIODIC "UNPRODUCTIVE" MEETINGS. CHUN PROPOSED THEREFORE THAT FUTURE SNCC CONTACTS TAKE PLACE AT A LOWER LEVEL, SUCH AS BETWEEN SPOKESMEN. LEE REPLIED THAT HE HAD NO AUTHORITY TO DISCUSS THE PROPOSAL, WHEREUPON CHUN FURTHER PROPOSED THAT THE NINTH MEETING BE INDEFINITELY POSTPONED. LEE SAID HE WOULD TRANSMIT ROK SIDE'S REPLY LATER.

4. ROK SIDE MORNING OF DECEMBER 2 SENT REPLY TO NORTH REJECTING PROPOSAL TO POSTPONE MEETING AND SAYING THAT CIRCUMSTANCES REQUIRE MEETING AT AN EARLY DATE. LEE TOLD EMBOFF THAT NORTH MAY NOT REPLY UNTIL LATE DECEMBER 3 OR EARLY DECEMBER 4, BUT THAT SOUTH DOES NOT EXPECT NORTH TO AGREE TO MEET. IF NORTH FINALLY REFUSES TO COME TO MEETING, LEE SAID, SOUTH WILL MAKE PUBLIC STATEMENT ON SUSPENSION OF MEETINGS BY NORTH. HE SAID CONTENT OF STATEMENT HAS NOT BEEN DECIDED, BUT THAT IT WOULD CONTAIN "CONSTRUCTIVE" ELEMENTS AND NOT MERELY CRITICIZE NORTH.

5. ROK PRESS HAS GIVEN PROMINENT PLAY TO PYONGYANG'S "INDEFINITE DELAY" OF SNCC MEETING. PRESS SPECULATES THAT NORTH HAD UNGA IN MIND AN ALSO WISHED TO AVOID GIVING SOUTH OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE STRONG PROPAGANDA ATTACK ON NORTH OVER TUNNEL. THIS LINE ALSO TAKEN BY LEE, WHO TOLD EMBOFF THAT NORTH PROBABLY FEELS IT WOULD BE EMBARRASSED IN UN BY SOUTH CRITICIXM OF TUNNEL IN SNCC. SOUTH ALREADY HAD PRESENTATION PREPARED FOR USE AT DECEMBER 4 MEETING "CLARIFYING" POSITIONS OF THE TWO SIDES ON THE DIALOGUE AND DISCUSSING THE TUNNEL, LEE SAID. ROK HE ADDED WILL PROBABLY ISSUE THIS STATEMENT PUBOICLY IF MEETING IS NOT HELD, IN ADDITION TO MAKING STATEMENT ON THE POSTPONEMENT. HE DID NOT THINK ROK CONFIDENTIAL

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STATEMENT WOULD HAVE SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON KOREA DEBATE IN UNGA.

6. COMMENT: IT IS UNCLEAR TO US AT THIS POINT WHETHER NORTH ACTUALLY PREPARED TO RESUME TALKS IN JANUARY AS THEIR RADIO STATES. REGARDLESS, ROK CAN BE EXPECTED TO EXPLOIT SITUATION BY CALLING ATTENTION TO THE NORTH'S INSINCERITY AS OPPOSED TO SOUTH'S READINESS TO CONTINUE

THE DIALOGUE IMMEDIATELY.
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